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Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec : Drawings and Sketches in Colour

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

Drawings and Sketches in Colour

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Selected and with an Introduction by Hanspeter Landolt

Preface by Edouard Julien, Director of the Musée d'Albi

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The Museum of Albi is unique in that it contains the largest and most complete collection of works by Toulouse-Lautrec in all media. Only there is it really possible to follow his development from the cradle to the grave.

Thus it was inevitable that the author should come to Albi in search of pictures to include in this book.

Mr. Landolt was especially interested in drawings in colour. He wished to concentrate on those works in which line predominates, works (mostly on paper) in which the artist's hand has traced a graphological record which reveals the whole of his temperament.

At one time or another, according to his mood or his whim, Lautrec must have drawn with every one of the innumerable media available to artists, from the pencil to the brush. However, as he was not merely a draughtsman but also a painter, he executed a large proportion of his sketches with a brush dipped in oil paint heavily diluted with turpentine. These, as Mr. Landolt has realized, since he has selected some for reproduction in this book, should be regarded as drawings in colour.

In these vivid sketches made direct from nature, where Lautrec was not thinking of a public, we can see more clearly than usual what preoccupied him as a draughtsman and how pitiless he was as an observer. With a few lively and incisive strokes he could express the peculiar characteristics of his model, fairly and without flattery. Did he not say that he aimed at the true rather than the ideal?

Despite his innate facility as a draughtsman, Lautrec was rarely content to accept as final those sketches which he made in a moment of enthusiasm and for which he employed a special technique. There is no better evidence of the tenacity with which he laboured to satisfy his artistic conscience than the series of drawings belonging to the Museum of Albi.

Moreover the Museum of Albi contains enough final versions, or 'finished' pictures as they are called, to prove his unquestionable authority as a painter. Admittedly Lautrec did not attempt to model in colour. Nor did he bother to elaborate a cunning technique of manipulating paint. Rather than work over a canvas with which he was not satisfied by piling on new layers of paint, he would wipe off his first attempt with a rag dipped in turpentine, because he was frightened that his brushwork might lose its freshness and spontaneity.

Similarly in several of his lithographs drawn in colour one finds traces of the painter in him, just as one does in the work of Daumier, whose line was, in the words of Baudelaire, "naturally coloured." Therefore the fact that Lautrec was a born draughtsman cannot be used to justify an artificial division of his work into categories: those of the painter, the draughtsman, and the lithographer.

May I repeat what I have already said many times, namely that Lautrec's genius was equally at home and absolute in whatever medium he chose to employ? Let us then seek no further but content ourselves with admiring and enjoying the entire range of his work, which has an extraordinary variety, beauty and concentration, even though it was produced in a short space of time. For it is no longer in doubt that Lautrec already occupies a high place among the great masters of all time.

EDOUARD JULIEN, *Director of the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi*

The later the period of nineteenth-century French painting one is considering, the more likely it is that art history will miss the point without the history of the artist himself. This is not to deny that, in all great art, the man and the work form an indissoluble unity. Usually, however, the unity is that of the temperament, which manifests itself just as clearly in the work as in the way of life. Thus a knowledge of the life is not essential for an understanding of the artistic achievement. It merely illustrates this achievement, and serves as a kind of *pons asinorum* for the insensitive. The orderliness of Ingres and his dislike of anything revolutionary; Delacroix's hunger for ever newer and more colourful images and forms of life; the middle-class reliability and self-assurance of Corot, Manet and Degas – using the word middle-class in its highest sense: all these characteristics have been wholly carried over into the work.

Towards the end of the century the picture changes. Three artists above all continually compel us to see their achievement as painters in the closest connexion with their life: Gauguin, van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec. In the years around the turn of the century all three were prematurely broken on the wheel of life. They lacked that tenacious, rationally justified middle-class self-assurance which allowed the Impressionists to take their stand and which brought them triumph over the far from negligible opposition of the outside world; they lacked, too, that proud sense of laying the foundations for the art of the new century which fortified the generation of the Fauves and the Cubists. Van Gogh fell a victim to a world divested of its gods, defencelessly placed at its mercy. By their very existence and their special relationship to the world, Gauguin and Lautrec demonstrated the fragility of the *fin de siècle*, that night-flowering plant. In Gauguin's case this was

chiefly due to the stress on the intellectual (the phenomenon of the flight from culture is here relevant); in Lautrec's to the immediacy of sense impression.
Thus it is not merely delight in the anecdotal that makes anyone concerned with Lautrec's art turn first to his life.

Henri-Marie-Raymond de Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa was born on the 14th of November 1864 in the family's town house at Albi as a late descendant of those Counts of Toulouse who, at the height of the Middle Ages, had ruled over a considerable part of Southern France. His parents, Count Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec and Adèle-Zoé Tapié de Céleyran, were first cousins, and the fact that marriage between near relations was no exception in these noble families is shown by the marriage of a sister of Lautrec's father with his mother's brother. Such an extreme and unnatural pruning of the family tree did not however, as was perhaps intended, ensure that Lautrec would be left a great deal of property, but merely that he inherited a sickly constitution. This became evident when the boy, whose father was in process of bringing him up as a worthy partner in his passions of hunting and chivalry, broke both legs in unspectacular falls at short intervals and remained from then on a cripple laboriously shuffling through life a torso grown to normal size. This figure, at once comic and pathetic, has come down to us in a great number of photographs, and, above all, in a series of merciless self-caricatures.
The boy had started drawing early; but his artistic activity seems to have grown into a passion only in the periods of convalescence following the two accidents. He did, indeed, continue with his humanistic studies, but his perseverance until they assumed some tangible result was ob-

viously more a matter of duty than of inner conviction. There is something absurd about the idea of Lautrec sitting at a school desk only a year before he painted the masterly portraits of his mother and of the gardener's boy Routy in 1882; but perhaps it was the consciousness of his mastery which gave the young man strength to be patient.

What is no less astonishing is that, in that same year 1882, the painter who had appropriated so abruptly to himself early Impressionism's means of expression, entered the Paris atelier of Léon Bonnat, an Academician laden with orders and offices, and thus demonstrated his readiness to learn the craft of painting all over again in the traditional way. Lautrec endured the ateliers of Bonnat and later of Cormon until about 1885. This again was not a sign of uncertainty but of strength and self-confidence, and in a lesser degree perhaps also a fruit of his aristocratic upbringing, which makes the ability to serve a prerequisite of mastery, of absolute authority and control.

It would be superfluous to describe the *milieu* in which Lautrec lived in Paris, and which he immortalized in his work. Even a superficial acquaintance with Lautrec's art evokes visions of cabarets, music-halls and *café concerts*, of the theatre and the circus, of Aristide Bruant, Yvette Guilbert, Marcelle Lender, of the crowd of anonymous habitués of the 'Moulin Rouge' and of the girls of the *maisons closes*. Lautrec has become the epitome of Montmartre, as Modigliani later became of Montparnasse. It is not so easy to avoid the fair question of the psychological background to this choice of subject. How did the descendant of an ancient French noble family, without the slightest personal leanings towards republicanism, become a scene-painter of an indelicate and decaying dancer, an habitué of popular dance halls, an intimate and a friend of the family in brothels?

It would be easy to shift to the father the responsibility for the son's estrangement from the social class into which he was born and for which he was brought up. For when, after the two accidents, the boy proved incapable of riding and hunting, Count Alphonse de Toulouse-Lautrec turned against him and treated him from then on as a failure and a freak. What seems more likely than the supposition that Lautrec felt himself rejected and despised by his own class, and sought human contact where social divisions scarcely existed and where there was in all directions a complete lack of prejudice, namely in the Bohemian life? But many circumstances militate against such an explanation, as for instance the steadfast loyalty of his mother and of his cousin Gabriel Tapié de Céleyran, but above all the character of Lautrec himself, as we know it from the descriptions of contemporaries and from the least fallible of all documents – his art.

Lautrec had a passion for life, and for life at its most vital, most variegated, most changeable and inexhaustible. Would it have been possible even to begin to satisfy this passion if he had remained all his life the painter of hunts and elegant coaching scenes, which he was in his youth? (And the fact that, although his artistic expression was encouraged by the two accidents and the farewell to life as a country gentleman, it was not the logical consequence of them is sufficiently demonstrated by the earliest drawings and the rapid, almost blind rise to mastery. It is, therefore, wholly absurd to imagine a healthy Lautrec as a count with aristocratic interests rather than as a painter.) Would the insatiability of Lautrec's eye, combined with his almost exclusive interest in man as the subject of artistic treatment have let him live anywhere other than in that metropolis, that mirror of the era where the absence of conventional ties made the most bizarre combinations and intersections

possible, where the immediacy of humanity was not hidden behind a mask of social etiquette?

Lautrec's relationship to the *milieu* of metropolitan pleasures seems remarkably contradictory. Critical distance and existential commitment confront each other in him with no overlapping. Daumier's dissection of mid-century bourgeois Paris (though quite differently expressed) was no more clear and searching than was Lautrec's vision of bohemian Paris as it whirled to meet the turn of the century; and no contemporary testimony conveys so much cold-blooded distancing and incorruptibility as the magnificent picture of morals and manners exhibited by Lautrec's work in its entirety. But this ubiquitous observer was at the same time a slave to the object of his interest, and paid for his devotion with his life.

Nevertheless even this extreme sacrifice almost has an air of being voluntary and self-determined. That is why Lautrec is basically not a tragic figure, or at least is so in a much lesser degree than Daumier, Gauguin or even Van Gogh. There are, indeed, deeply moving records of agony in Lautrec's case (as, for instance, the letters he wrote in 1899 when incarcerated in Dr. Sémelaigne's mental home at Neuilly), but these are rare and brief moments of lost composure. The picture which Lautrec's friends and contemporaries have bequeathed to us is that of a delicate ironist and well-bred companion, whose southern temperament could indeed break out, but never in a pathetic wrangling with the world and with his own, only too unjust fate. Lautrec is characterized by that proud superiority, free of all arrogance and therefore so inevitable in its effect (the French have coined for it the untranslatable concept of *désinvolture*), which all true nobility carries as a shining token on its brow.

The outward course of his life can be quickly sketched. Apart from occasional journeys to England and the Netherlands, a Spanish trip which provided him with the experience of Toledo and its great master El Greco, and short visits to his home in the South and to the seaside resorts of the Atlantic Coast, Lautrec worked in Paris. An ever-increasing indulgence in alcohol led to a nervous collapse, which in 1899 made it necessary for him to stay in a sanatorium. His recovery was the result of a supreme effort of will, but the decay in his powers persisted. The last few weeks were spent with his mother at the Château of Malromé. There he died on the 9th September 1901 in the presence of his closest friends.

Lautrec cannot be assigned to any group of artists or any artistic movement. He is a figure all on his own. For convenience he is sometimes ranged with the Impressionists, but this is confusing and superficial, and can at best be excused by the fact that Lautrec outlived only one of the doctrinaire Impressionists, Sisley (and that by only two years), while the others died long after him (even decades in some cases like Monet and Guillaumin) though most of them belong to the generation before Lautrec. If, however, one starts from the date of birth, which is the only objectively correct procedure, Lautrec has to be included with Ranson (1864), Vallotton, Sérusier (both 1865), Bonnard, Roussel (both 1867), Vuillard (1868), Denis (1870), in short, with the Nabis group, for whom Gauguin was the decisive guide.
But Lautrec will not fit into either group. He is at once set apart from both the Impressionists and the Nabis by his distaste for theories and for any doctrinaire way of thinking. Neither does he, as might well have been the case, come to similar conclusions to theirs by his shorter, more direct way of creation from observation.

Lautrec, the observer and fashioner of men, has nothing to do with mute nature, which was the real pictorial subject of the Impressionists (particularly of the three strict Impressionists, Monet, Sisley and Pissarro). Compared with his portraits and groups, even Manet's *Olympia* of 1863 has the effect of a still life, to say nothing of Renoir's love of light in the *Moulin de la Galette* of 1876, or even of his later female nudes. The only artist of the Impressionist generation who has a kinship with Lautrec is Degas. But what is common to both artists is matched by what separates them; in Degas the effect is one of coolness and wit, and the carefully planned composition is the actual sphere in which his innovations are operative (see, for example, Hausenstein's study of Degas); Lautrec, on the other hand, starts from the human individual, from the single form, which he fills with the maximum of expressive vitality and human intensity as well as formal compactness. There are in Lautrec's work only occasional reminiscences of the flat-pattern art of the Nabis with its striving towards symbolism, and the points of contact are found in a very short span of his production, which in any case is concentrated within a rather restricted term of life.

The artistic development of Lautrec takes place in a very small compass, too narrow to be able to speak of a cross-measurement. The image of a straight or winding line, which usually forces itself upon us when considering an artist's development, is from the first an impossible one in Lautrec's case. The sequence of phases of this development also lacks any historical logic; it appears to be accidental and only meaningful from a psychological point of view.

There is indeed sudden transition in Lautrec's work and it could scarcely be more surprising or bold – a transition from the early works

of the child (which make it possible to speak of a 'Lautrec *avant* Lautrec') to the first masterpieces at seventeen and eighteen. The delicate watercolours and small oil-paintings of the early period reveal decided talent, but no more; and they do not disclose the road which this talent will take. The pointer to the future is rather the predilection for the object in motion, the absence of all inactivity, which reveals itself in them as a trait of character. The drawings of this period are more powerfully assertive; they are so full of keen and incorruptible observation that it needs no special detective sense to recognize in them the start of a great draughtman's *œuvre* (Plate 1).

Out of this tonal painting there bursts the mature, highly cultivated, luminous and colourful *plein-airisme*, which Manet (in, for example, the *Père Lathuille* group) sets over against doctrinaire Impressionism round about 1880. The suddenness of this is rather a shock to a person who experiences it in retrospect, and who would in a way like to see the norm corroborated by an advance established step by step. But everything miraculous shocks, and sometimes offends. If we take it for granted that the dates usually accepted are correct (they are in the main those proposed by Lautrec's friend and confidant Maurice Joyant and no one has hitherto had any more accurate knowledge to oppose to them), then Lautrec underwent this transition in 1881. That year offers the last, almost dilettante pictures of stylish carriage parties, but also the magnificent portrait of his mother as she sits at the breakfast table with downcast eyes. In the next year there follow the two portraits of his mother in the open air and those of the garden-boy Routy. There is no time here for the gradual mastery of new techniques; and it is certain that his eyes were not opened to colour *plein-air* painting by Princeteau, his first artistic mentor and teacher and the one who led him to Bonnat.

We must accept as a *fait accompli* this sudden arrival at mastery without preparation. The causes remain unfathomable. We lack, too, the facts which would help us to determine the nature of the impulse giving rise to it. It is obvious that Lautrec saw some of Manet's works and found in them the luminously clear expression of his own interests and disposition, hitherto mute. But the event is not to be so narrowly restricted to the artistic sphere; it leads us out of a boyish, playful world, almost the world of toy soldiers, to the one magnificent theme of Lautrec's mature art, to Man. Is it too bold an assumption to suppose that a decisive human experience and the ripening into manhood was the real basis of his sudden artistic maturity?

Later the academic ideas picked up in the ateliers of Bonnat and Cormon led Lautrec back to a style less free in its colour, more concerned with tones, and with light taking over the function of plastic modelling. In the remaining two decades left to him for the full development of his artistry, Lautrec continually plays off against each other these two possible modes of pictorial expression, and also conquers all the territory lying between them. In the same year 1885 he produced the 'classical' tonal portrait *Carmen* and the portrait of *Suzanne Valadon* which, drenched in colour, vibrates in its short brush-strokes; and towards the end of the decade, in quick succession and similarly contrasting, the picture of *Rosa la Rouge* built up entirely on the clash of light and shade, and the strongly coloured, non-spatial portraits of women in M. Forest's garden. In his late period, too, Lautrec repeatedly returns to that chiaroscuro painting which had already been left far behind; he does this, for instance, in the picture of the *Examination at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris*, which is developed out of the darkness like Cézanne's early paintings of the sixties.

A third mode of expression in form and colour finally broadens the field which Lautrec was to occupy as a painter: the concentration of colour into compact non-tonal planes and in consequence the emphasizing of the non-existent outline. This mode is the most interesting historically and the most significant for us today, as it was developed by Gauguin and his disciples into one of the basic pillars of twentieth-century art. Lautrec was intensively occupied with it directly after 1891, the year in which he created his first poster and was searching for forms which lent themselves to decoration viewed from a distance. The poster style again was 'discovered' by Lautrec without wearisome groping or circumlocutory experiment. However, it was from then on restricted to this special field; it enriched and fructified the creative activity of the painter and draughtsman Lautrec, but did not direct it into new paths (cf. also the Notes to Plates 5, 6 and 17). For Lautrec, as opposed to Gauguin, it is not the flat colour surface that is primarily important but the outline. He does indeed concentrate the colours into fairly large surfaces, where the contour is not much emphasized (as in the large picture *Au Salon* in Albi), but the opposite case is more characteristic, as in the 1894 profile portrait of a blonde prostitute, in which Jedlicka finds the hard stroke of the outline of the face disturbing. It is, however, less a special formal purpose which so often leads Lautrec to accentuate the contour, than that elementary preponderance of the draughtsman over the painter which characterizes Lautrec's artistic individuality in general. We may see the disparity between Lautrec and the thoroughgoing addiction of the Nabis to flat coloured surfaces, by comparing his representations of couples in bed (Pl. 11) with Vuillard's *Au lit* of 1891.
At this point in Lautrec's development his contact with the Japanesque becomes evident. It cannot be accidental that the most two-dimensional

and sign-like of all his works were produced in connexion with a ballet given at the Nouveau Cirque in 1892 and described as a *Fantaisie japonaise et nautique* (Plate 5). Lautrec, however, soon dropped this particular borrowing from the two-dimensional art of East Asia. It did not harmonize (particularly in its impersonal sign-like character) with his final artistic aims, or at least with his aims in drawing and painting. As a poster artist, on the other hand, he never abandoned the 'Japanese' principle of absolute flatness of plane surfaces. Less obvious, but all the more lasting, is the Japanese influence on his manner of composition, which can only be suggested here in the formula: renunciation of strict linear perspective and thus of any attempt to achieve a correct illusion of space, and a preference for an exaggerated view from above.

Proof that Lautrec stands on the margin of the stream of development of French painting at the turn of the last century is not confined to his independent relationship to the postulates and advances of Gauguin and the Nabis; for in 1893 he painted as a stage-decoration the *Mère Capulet*, and into the large flat colour surfaces and sharp contours of this high-spirited portrait of a heroine he infused so much subjective impetus that one is inclined to see in it an anticipation of the development which, more than ten years later, after Lautrec's death, was to lead from Symbolism to Fauvism. The possibility of this development was only indicated by Lautrec and was not carried further by him, so he cannot on this account be labelled as a forerunner of the Fauves.

In the second half of the nineteenth century his attitude to light is the decisive criterion by which the standpoint of every painter may be determined. Here, too, Lautrec shows himself outside the main stream. For the Impressionists, (colourful) light is the real substance of the world of objects; for the Nabis, on the other hand, it is of no importance

even as an element in building form, but only, in the contrast of light and shade, an abstract medium of composition. Between these two extremes of warm and living, and of dead and abstract light, Lautrec takes a central position. One must first remember that in Lautrec's pictures it is never the warm light of the sun that shines but the pale, cool light of the gas lamp or of the electric bulb. The portraits of women painted in the garden of M. Forest are, indeed, colourful, but in no way full of light. For Lautrec, colour is not corpuscular light but luminous matter.

But in many of Lautrec's works light is not just an incidental pictorial motif. These works show persons standing in the glare of the footlights with no sunlight on their faces, but rather a new physiognomy produced by the artificial light underneath. It would not be in the spirit of Lautrec to call this light magical; but it appears, at any rate, to be an imaginary one (Plate 15).

Lautrec, by his own particular relationship to the content of the picture, differs from all his contemporaries including the doctrinaire Impressionists, whose attempt to apprehend reality exhausted itself in quasi-scientific questionings (what does our eye apprehend? how must the painter proceed if he is to reproduce an optically faithful picture of the visible?), and thus neglected the portrayal of manners and morals. For Cézanne, for instance, the content of the picture is as unimportant as for the Impressionists, but for entirely different reasons; visible reality is important for him as a manifestation of the structural laws of creation, and for these to be perceptible in the picture the painter must suppress all the individual and exceptional characteristics of the subject, must conceal all its connexions with the life around it, must peel

off all surrounding atmosphere (in the literal as well as the metaphorical sense). Manet and Renoir did, indeed, create pictures of manners; but in them the contemporary impulse seems to melt into a timeless hymn to the beauty of existence (at its most unmistakable in Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*). This enabled them to achieve mastery in still-life painting. In this connexion the person most nearly related to Lautrec is Degas, and, after Lautrec, Degas is certainly the greatest painter of manners in the second half of the nineteenth century, with his interest like Lautrec's directed almost exclusively to Man as his subject. Yet his cooler temperament, his delight in the surprising pose, his frequently observable playing with the subject set him apart from his younger colleague and competitor.

With the Symbolists, whom one could also call Neo-Romantics, the subject becomes a vehicle for subjective ideas and moods. Gauguin's paintings of the people of Brittany and the South Seas say less about their peculiarities than about Gauguin's. Two contemporaries within his own generation, Bonnard and Vuillard (and particularly the latter), are closer to Lautrec. The world they glorify in their painting is a wholly different one; Bonnard's is a private world filled with love and reverence for creation until it recalls the reign of antiquity on Mediterranean shores; Vuillard's is the lovingly wooed world of middle-class intimacy, painstakingly kept intact. Yet these worlds also are lively and humane; they do not merely 'furnish' subjects for the painter, but demand that the work of art should win them over and perpetuate them.

There is scarcely any artist of modern times whose *œuvre* calls for documentary interpretation as does Lautrec. Obviously it is impossible, for reasons of space, to do this in this book, but the iconography within limits is discussed in the Notes to the Plates. This has sometimes led

to the mistaken conclusion that Lautrec's work is of importance in the first place because of the content of the pictures; Lautrec is regarded as a kind of pictorial reporter of the Parisian *fin de siècle*. But ideas of this kind are disproved by the fact that it is not necessary to know about the iconography in order to enjoy Lautrec's work, because in the process of translation into the picture he enriches what is time-bound and personal with timeless and supra-personal values.

It is not wholly easy to judge impartially Lautrec's relationship to the picture content, because in the artistic development of the last fifty years an interest in the subject suggests that the artist is depreciating the form. Artistic quality has become almost synonymous with indifference to the content of the picture. It is, however, grossly negligent to overlook the importance of the subject in Lautrec. In this respect the sketches are particularly informative. One would suppose that they, above all, would provide an opportunity for formal practice, for trying out formal possibilities and weighing one against the other. Yet to one's great astonishment it becomes plain that Lautrec's artistic mastery is present throughout, and does not have to be laboriously regained every time; the artist can therefore concentrate entirely on the subject. In this respect Lautrec is an exceptional case, an 'original genius' whose like occurs very rarely in the history of art.

Sublimation of the objective is achieved in Lautrec not so much through artistic modelling as by the human point of view. The most instructive proof of that is found in those works which, by their pictorial content, touch the erotic. The proportion of these works in Lautrec's *œuvre* is higher than in any of the other great painters of his time. And yet Lautrec cannot be described as an erotic painter; not in the positive,

seemly sense of Renoir or Bonnard, still less in the pejorative sense of Rops and countless other forgotten painters of flowery allegories of the loss of maidenly innocence. He had no talent for the first, because he did not fold the world in his arms, but took his distance from it as a penetrating observer and seeker after truth; for the second his pretensions were, quite simply, too high. When, in drawings for some particular occasion, he oversteps the bounds of complete propriety, this is not done calculatingly, but from high spirits and with a faint smile, rather as in satyric drama. The extensive group of pictures of the brothels in the Rue des Moulins and the Rue d'Amboise is even freer of flippancy, and in fact their content is no more than observation of the '*condition humaine*.' An equivocal play of obscenities was as far from Lautrec's mind as a pathetic arraignment of social abuses. In such pictures we may recognize at its clearest Lautrec's essential nature: lack of illusions without cynicism, clear-sightedness without coldness, complete honesty of purpose and devotion to truth without the zeal of the moralist and reformer (cf. the Notes to Plates 7 and 10).

In our selection of pictures Lautrec appears as a draughtsman with rich resources of colour, as a designer, as an ingenious improvisator. We seek him out at the point where each pictorial idea still has two very different ways open to it – graphic representation or pure painting. This poses the general question of Lautrec's relationship to these possible modes of artistic expression. Was he primarily draughtsman, illustrator or painter?

The paintings have often and wrongly been neglected in favour of the lithographs. In every work, however, the contribution of the draughtsman may be observed. There are no paintings by Lautrec, like so many

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by Bonnard, which seem almost to be created out of the pigments themselves. Indeed one is often tempted to describe as coloured drawings works, which by ordinary standards could only be called paintings. But whether the concept of drawing is understood more in its technical and formal sense (drawing as the art of the line, of the stroke) or whether the decisive criterion is taken to be the spontaneity, the sketchlike quality, Lautrec in both cases reveals himself a supreme draughtsman even in his paintings. The special technique in oils which he developed in order to preserve even in his painting the feel and quality of a sketch will be discussed shortly.

The posters occupy an isolated position in Lautrec's art. They are consciously two-dimensional decoration. The step from the sketch for a poster to the poster itself is often greater than the difference between a similar sketch and a painting for which it is not a direct preparation. Lautrec's first placard was for the 'Moulin Rouge' and dates from 1891; it was in that year that Pierre Bonnard produced his first placard, for 'France Champagne'; and, if one is to believe Thadée Natanson, Bonnard's was the earlier of the two. But even if Lautrec's contribution to the revival of the art of the poster is not as exceptional as sometimes appears in retrospect, yet he recognized the special laws of the poster better and gave them clearer visible form than Bonnard. Whereas in the latter there is overlapping between indoor painting and outdoor decoration, thus endangering the purity of the genre, Lautrec distinguishes sharply between the two (cf. also the Notes to Plates 2, 17 and 32).

The stroke, the line, as elements in the drawing have in Lautrec's whole work an incomparable spontaneity, liveliness and wealth of expression. They always make direct assertions, and are the limpid distillations of a

temperament refined by the mind, but not dominated by it. A Lautrec drawing, when compared with one by, for instance Ingres, gives an impression of automatic writing, and this lack of cerebral artistic intelligence in Lautrec explains why this master of line did not go over into the Gauguin camp. In our selection the colour study for the *Ballet de Papa Chrysanthème* (Plate 5), and that of *Loie Fuller doing her Dance of the Veils* (Plate 6) come closest to the linearism of the Gauguin school. Lautrec soon rid himself of this, to him, wholly foreign conception of the line, retaining and transposing it only for the poster. In the drawings and paintings he returns to a free line, which more and more invades and overruns the plane-surface. Sometimes sonorous and swaying (Plates 16, 17, 29, 32), sometimes sweeping thrillingly along or nervously flickering (Plates 21, 24, 27), it is always saturated with intuitive vision and animated in all its length. Thus in Lautrec, line, from being an abstraction, becomes the vehicle of life at its most perceptible.

Just as Lautrec's paintings are permeated with the special quality of drawings, so are his technique, his method of expression wholly individual. A preliminary remark, however, is necessary. The late nineteenth century, by its abandonment of the strict discipline of craftsmanship, allowed the artist a freedom of choice which had scarcely existed before. The process of individualization, unmistakably evident in art as the projection and embodiment of a view of the world, does not stop short even when faced with craftsmanship. The '*procédé spécial*' is in a certain sense the craftsman in the artist taking his revenge for the fact that the colours, canvases and materials are delivered, ready for painting, by the manufacturer.

For Lautrec it was essential also that as a painter he should have a method of expressing himself which did not hinder rapid execution. He thus thinned oil paints with volatile, quick-drying turpentine and painted on unprepared, absorbent board. (The French, somewhat ambiguously, call this technique *peinture à l'essence*.) With it the thickness of the colour could be varied at will, as one may verify in the *Study for the Portrait of M. Delaporte* (Plate 4), one example among dozens: the face, the skin, are comparatively thickly painted with opaque pigment; the hat, on the other hand, is only sketched in in very thin colour.

For Lautrec the grey board is not simply a ground on which he may conjure up the illusion of form and space. On the contrary, it is an important element in his artistic calculation. The instances in which it is completely painted over and concealed by colour are very rare. Almost always it has a contribution to make as an accentuated neutral surface, where a spatial illusion is created by a few spare indications. The bare board calls us back to 'reality,' and reminds us that the artist has projected his vision on to a flat surface (Plates 2, 11, 12). But Lautrec goes even further: he places his figures unrelatedly and non-spatially on the flat surface, and thus once again proves himself a draughtsman (Plates 4, 13, 21).

Peinture à l'essence is the most important technical medium of Lautrec's colour drawing; but he also used other painting media. The nearest approach to pure drawing is in the drawing with coloured pencils, especially in those instances in which a single coloured pencil fulfils the office of pen or pencil (Plate 16). During his stay in the institution at Neuilly in 1899 Lautrec worked almost exclusively with coloured pencils, which, by force of circumstance, came to take the place of brush

and oils. The use he makes of them then is therefore reminiscent of painting (Plates 29, 30).

Pastel Lautrec used rarely, but when he did it was not confined to any one period in his creative activity and, characteristically, it was always adapted to the peculiarity of style then favoured by him. Thus the pastel *Portrait of Van Gogh* from the early period is 'impressionistic,' the large pastel version of the *Au Salon* is two-dimensional and locally coloured, and in the *Barmaid* of 1898 we meet again that ingenious distribution of accents which is so characteristic of the artist's late period (Plate 28).

It was not often that Lautrec turned to watercolours. Our example of a pure watercolour (Plate 23) is almost as isolated in the work generally as it is exceptional because of its purpose (stage-decoration) and its subject (pure landscape). The watercolour illustrations to Goncourt's *La fille Elisa* (Plates 18–20) he never repeated. Occasionally he heightened the effect of life in his drawings (Plates 8, 16) by touching them up with watercolour. His most frequent use of the medium, however, was in the preparation of coloured lithographs. On a pull from the first stone, which gave in black or in brown tone only the drawing and the contours, Lautrec placed the colouristic accents with watercolours, allowing himself a more personal 'handwriting' than in the later work with the lithographic crayon on the stone (Plates 14, 25, 26, 31).

All Lautrec's sketches, a selection of which are given here, have in common that immediacy and freshness which mark the preliminary version of an idea for a picture; but in addition they give an impression of 'finished' works. In contrast to, for instance, Degas' studies, which always seem like fragments of pictures (because it was in elaborate compositions that Degas' artistic intentions found expression), the

sketches of Lautrec, or perhaps one might say more precisely the sketches of the draughtsman Lautrec, always have about them the sense of completion. Lautrec, and this is what distinguishes him above all from Degas, does not see the world in its mutual relations so much as individual Man, with all that is reflected and expressed in his outward appearance; and he sees him in new and unaccustomed perspective. This aspect can be grasped in the sketch just as well as in the carefully thought out and pictorially concentrated painting.

The key position which Lautrec's colour sketches occupy in his work as a whole is shown by their equally close similarity to painting or to drawing.

Literature

It is no part of this volume's task to give a list of the extremely rich literature on Lautrec, especially as there has recently appeared a bibliography in the Lautrec monograph of *Jourdain* and *Adhémar*. In our Notes to the Plates the following publications are referred to by the abbreviations indicated:

Cat. Albi: Edouard Julien: Toulouse-Lautrec au Musée d'Albi. Albi 1952.

Cat. Exp. 1931: Exposition H. de Toulouse-Lautrec, Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, mai-juin 1931.

Cat. Exp. Orangerie 1951: Orangerie des Tuileries, Toulouse-Lautrec, Exposition en l'honneur du Cinquantième Anniversaire de sa mort, mai-août 1951.

Delteil: Loys Delteil: Le peintre-graveur illustré, T. X et XI: H. de Toulouse-Lautrec. Paris 1920. (Critical catalogue of the whole graphic *œuvre* with reproductions of all the sheets.)

'Elles' 1952: Toulouse-Lautrec: 'Elles.' Préface de Jean-Vallery-Radot. Texte et notices de Jean Adhémar. Monte Carlo (André Sauret) 1952.

Jedlicka: Gotthard Jedlicka: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Berlin (Bruno Cassirer) 1929.

Jourdain/Adhémar: T-Lautrec. Essai sur Toulouse-Lautrec par Francis Jourdain; Lautrec peintre-graveur par Jean Adhémar; avec un 'répertoire' Lautrec et des notices analytiques par Jean Adhémar. Paris (Coll. Prométhée, Ed. Pierre Tisné) 1952.

Joyant I: Maurice Joyant: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 1864–1901. T. I: Le peintre. Paris (Floury) 1926.

Joyant II: Maurice Joyant: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 1864–1901. T. II: Dessins-Estampes-Affiches. Paris (Floury) 1927.

Julien, Affiches: Edouard Julien: Les affiches de Toulouse-Lautrec. Monte Carlo (André Sauret) 1950.

Julien, Au Cirque: Toulouse-Lautrec, Au Cirque, 39 dessins au crayon de couleurs. Préface de Edouard Julien. Monte Carlo (André Sauret)1952.

Julien, Dessins: Edouard Julien: Dessins de T-Lautrec. Monaco (Les Documents d'Art) 1942.

Lassaigne 1939: Jacques Lassaigne: Toulouse-Lautrec. Paris (Ed. Hypérion) 1939.

Lassaigne 1953: Jacques Lassaigne: Lautrec. Genève (Skira) 1953.

Colour Photographs:

Basle, Hans Hinz (by courtesy of Conzett & Huber, Zurich): 26. – Basle, Farbphoto M. Kaufmann: 1–11, 14–16, 21–23, 27, 30–32. – Paris, André Thévenet: 13, 18–20, 24, 25, 28, 29. – Zurich, E. Müller-Rieder: 12.

Plates

1 Three Figures on Horseback

Pencil and watercolour on paper. 17,6 × 25,2 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed about 1875/78. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant II, 177. – Cat. Albi, No. D 72.

In content and form even the earliest of Lautrec's works, which from their author's age might still be called children's drawings, contain the same decisive traits as his mature productions. As far as content is concerned we find him thoroughly mastering some quite special part of the world. What the hot-house and shadow growths of the metropolis will be to the adult, the subjects and occupations of seigniorial existence – horses, the hunt and elegant carriage outings – are to the growing boy. Formally there is the preponderance of the drawing over the colour. To how small an extent Lautrec can be said to have used colour as a jumping-off point in this early work is revealed by the Amazon on the left; for her whole appearance is completely expressed just by the drawing alone.

The sheet here reproduced is one of a great variety of early drawings, which are for the most part housed in the Musée d'Albi. They are not so much preparatory studies as rough sketches with which the young Lautrec mastered the surrounding world, without thinking of consolidating them into pictures.

2 La Goulue and Valentin Le Désossé in the Moulin de la Galette

Peinture à l'essence on board. 51 × 37 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed 1887. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 262. – Cat. Albi, No. 39.

In the late eighties Lautrec adopted a new, and from then on central subject-matter – life in the music-halls and cabarets of Montmartre. The *Quadrille de la chaise Louis XIII* of 1886 (Jourdain/Adhémar, Plate 16) is followed by *La Goulue and Valentin le Désossé*. Around 1890 these scenes multiply; the 'Moulin-Rouge,' 'Les Ambassadeurs,' the 'Folies-Bergère' are the places of amusement whose attractions and mood Lautrec captures in drawings and paintings, and which enjoy such unprecedented renown because he once depicted them.

La Goulue, a successful, very ordinary dancer of Alsation origin (a contemporary described her as a '*monstre adorée*') is one of the most frequent and best-known of Lautrec's models. When in 1895 he created for her booth the two large panels now in the Paris Musée de l'Impressionnisme (Lassaigne 1939, Plates 108 and 109; Jourdain/Adhémar, Illustration V to Text), he turned back to the 1887 study, a further version of which survives in the Hahnloser Collection, Berne (Lassaigne 1953, Ill. p. 40). For Lautrec this is a rare instance of returning to an earlier formula after the lapse of a period of years.

3 Study of a Figure in Motion

Peinture à l'essence on tracing-paper. 65 × 49 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed 1888. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant II, 192. – Cat. Albi, No. 202.

The Museum at Albi possesses a series of coloured sketches on tracing-paper by Lautrec. From them the following method of work may be reconstructed: the painter laid a sheet of tracing-paper on a drawing and this permitted him to work directly in colour without having to make a new copy. The most extensive group of tracings that has survived is that with the theme *Artilleur et femme* (Cat. Albi, Nos. 32–36). It is instructive, too, to see two 'tracings' reproduced with the original drawing in Julien, *Dessins*, Plate 34.

The fact that many of these sketches on tracing-paper lack the verve of drawing and, with their short strokes of colour which often look rather like commas, remind us of the painting of classical Impressionism, should not be allowed to mislead us. For Lautrec could observe the outlines during the whole process, while we today have before us only the detached colour study. Yet one is probably justified in assuming that the experience and assurance gained by this unusual method play their part in the comparatively non-linear technique of some paintings of the immediately succeeding period, as, for instance, the *Femme à l'ombrelle dans le jardin Forest* of 1889 (Jourdain/Adhémar, Plate 22) or the *Buveuse* of the same year (Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum; Jourdain/Adhémar, Plate 26).

4 Study for the Portrait of M. Delaporte (?)

Peinture à l'essence on board. 58 × 49 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed 1892. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 276. – Cat. Albi, No. 59.

Though Joyant in his catalogue designates the person shown as 'Monsieur X,' he has lately been thought to be the Delaporte whose portrait Lautrec painted in 1893 (Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, No. 922; Jourdain/Adhémar, Plate 69).

Less familiar than the contemporaneous portrait study of Mr. Warrener, the *Englishman at the Moulin-Rouge*, in the Musée d'Albi (Cat. Albi, No. 56; illustrated in Joyant I, p. 139), this head testifies equally well to the maturity of Lautrec as a portrait painter. The stroke is terse, keen and aggressive; yellowish-white flesh colour and a strong blue contour react against each other, and the animated silhouette of the profile is forcibly set off against the background by the light contrasting colour. With the utmost economy of means an almost nervous animation is achieved, and compared with it the portraits of the earlier period convey something of the tranquillity of still life.

5 Study for the 'Ballet de Papa Chrysanthème'

Peinture à l'essence on board. 64,5 × 57,2 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed 1892. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 276. – Cat. Albi, No. 58.

Joyant tells us that 'Papa Chrysanthème's Ballet' was a '*Fantaisie japonaise et nautique représentée au Nouveau-Cirque en novembre 1892.*' It stimulated Lautrec to make two studies, the more detailed of which is here reproduced. Later the theme appears in a painting on glass, exhibited 1895 in the Paris 'Salon.' It had been executed by the famous American ceramist Louis C. Tiffany, a supporter of the *Art nouveau*, after a design by Lautrec. And in one of the colour drawings made during his time in 1899 at Dr. Sémelaigne's institution, he conjures up once again his earlier impressions of the ballet (Julien, *Au Cirque*, Plate 35).

A comparison of this ballet study with the picture of the Goulue-Valentin dancing partnership executed five years earlier (Plate 2) is very informative. If, in the latter, Lautrec in some respect marks off the two figures so that they may be seen as individuals, in the former it is anonymous and impersonal beauties which attract him: the play of colours, the movement, the rhythm. In this connexion the Far-Eastern (even if it is only the pseudo Far-Eastern) character which marks the ballet is not without relevance.

6 Loïe Fuller doing her Dance of the Veils

Peinture à l'essence on board. 65 × 47 cm. Signed with pencil bottom left. Executed 1893. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 277. – Cat. Albi, No. 63.

Miss Loïe Fuller, by birth an American, was creating a sensation in Paris in 1893 with her turn at the 'Folies-Bergère,' a dance in which the movement of coloured skirts and veils in the then still novel electric light produced a magical effect.

Lautrec's coloured study is in preparation for a lithograph (Delteil 39). The *peinture à l'essence* sketch, incomparably fresher and more spontaneous than the rather arty-crafty print with its gold overlay, goes a step further in the depersonalizing of the figure, already mentioned in connexion with the *Ballet de Papa Chrysanthème* (Plate 5); now the isolated figure of the dancer acquires a plant-like function; physiognomy retreats into the shadows, and the human body is reduced to a mere vehicle of mobile energy. The coloration, too, plays its part in this transformation; it becomes, in a sense, 'vegetable'; and the suggestion of night-blossom in its lilac, violet, pale green, rose and many intermediate tones evokes the mood of symbolist fairy tales.

Loïe Fuller's Dance of the Veils, which in itself constitutes a characteristic expression of the *Art nouveau* inspired other artists of the period too. In the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris are sculptures by Pierre Roche and Raoul F. Larche representing the same theme.

7 A Girl Undressing

Peinture à l'essence on board. 61 × 41 cm. Signed (monogram) with red chalk bottom right. Executed 1893. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 277. – Cat. Albi, No. 64.

This study for a lithograph (Delteil 24) is typical of Lautrec's *peinture à l'essence* manner; the body surfaces painted in bright yellow with white lights on the brown-grey foundation are sharply bounded by blue outlines, and these latter are emphasized even more in places by a bright contrasting colour. This technique, very effective and pithy despite all its economy, had already been used by Lautrec in the *Study for the Portrait of M. Delaporte* (Plate 4). The nude, however, offers entirely new possibilities for the sweeping, generous line, as the master of which Lautrec contributed not a little to the transition from Impressionism to Symbolism. And how much he cared for the effect of line is shown at its most impressive in the lithograph evolved out of the sketch.

Typical though the technique of this study is, the mood is wholly untypical. Here there suddenly appears an erotic piquancy which is otherwise wholly lacking in Lautrec's work, even in much more daring subjects, and this very borderline case makes it plain that Lautrec was not, as is so often declared, a victim, but rather the shaper of the cosmopolitan *fin-de-siècle*.

8 Yvette Guilbert

Pencil and watercolour on transparent paper, mounted. 25,8 × 13 cm. Signed (monogram) with pencil bottom right. Executed 1893. Basle, private collection.

Literature: Joyant II, 199. – Blot Sale Catalogue 1933, No. 23.

The *diseuse* Yvette Guilbert is one of those stars in the firmament of the Parisian cabaret at the turn of the century whose immortality is due to Lautrec. Our illustration, a preparatory study for one of the lithographs in the first Yvette Guilbert album of 1894 (Delteil 86), dates from the early period of the two artists' acquaintance, from that year 1893 which was, for Lautrec, so largely dominated by the *maisons closes*. It is easy to understand how this new 'model' with the languidly precise movements, the nervous mimicry, the refinement of expressive talent, this witty woman, who was as different from the girls of the Rue d'Amboise as is a racehorse from a cabby's nag, was for Lautrec a real emancipation. He depicted her in two series of lithographs, which appeared in 1894 and 1898. Lautrec, it must be confessed, received at first little commendation from the subject. The receipt of a coloured sketch for a poster is acknowledged by her in a letter to Lautrec in which we read: "*Mais, pour l'amour du ciel, ne me faites pas si atrocement laide! un peu moins...!*" ("But, for heaven's sake, don't make me so horribly ugly! Just a little less...!") And after the appearance of the first Yvette Guilbert album she even wanted to take legal proceedings against the artist; it was only the enthusiastic reception of the album by the critical public that soothed her again.

9 Portrait Study of a Seated Woman

Peinture à l'essence on board. 62 × 48 cm. Signed (monogram) with pencil bottom right. Executed 1893. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 280. – Cat. Albi, No. 68.

In the years 1892 to 1894 – they are above all the years of the *maisons closes* – Lautrec painted only a few portraits which were not at the same time pictures of morals and manners. Mr. Warrener appears as a ladies' man at the 'Moulin-Rouge,' Monsieur Delaporte as an interested spectator at the 'Jardin de Paris,' Lautrec's cousin Tapié de Céleyran as an opera-goer, and Jane Avril is caught in the middle of her cabaret act. Even where the painter only very barely indicates the *milieu* (as, say, in the *Marcelle* portrait, Plate 10), the people portrayed create it for themselves, and the portraits give the effect of being sections of a picture. Only rarely now did Lautrec find his way back to the evocation of people wholly at rest in themselves, like those we meet in the period just before and around 1890 (particularly the portraits of women produced in the garden of Père Forest). In this portrait study of a seated woman this is achieved by an almost forced conventional arrangement of the composition, which one finds surprising in Lautrec. But this is just where Lautrec shows himself a true Frenchman, filling the old bottles of a traditional formal arrangement with new wine, and making the woman, as she sits there in a centuries-old portrait pose, a little miracle of psychic and physical presence.

10 'Marcelle'

Peinture à l'essence on board. 46 × 29,5 cm. Signed with blue crayon bottom right. Executed 1894. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 285. – Cat. Albi, No. 82.

This portrait of a girl is one of the extensive group of brothel pictures executed between 1892 and 1895. It is a good example of what was premised in the Note to Plate 8: that in this most mature period the experience of the *milieu* was stronger for Lautrec than the individual. As a result his subjects create their own *milieu* around them. The incidental indication of the bed to the rear on the right is more than a mere illustrative attribute (as was, for example, the pair of compasses in an architect's hand in eighteenth-century portraiture); it encloses within the picture the whole destiny of the subject. And the way in which the girl's gaze slips away over the bed into an unreal (and, no doubt, unattainable) distance gives an involuntary hint of the approach of Symbolism. Not indeed of a symbolism 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,' but of a healthy, vigorous symbolism, which provides a non-doctrinaire answer to Impressionism because it is latent in every age and born of experience, and which expresses itself fully in plastic terms.

Marcelle

11 In Bed

Peinture à l'essence on board. 51,5 × 66 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom right. Executed 1894. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 285. – Cat. Albi, No. 86.

The impulse towards artistic formulation, which in the *maisons closes* pictures is easily overlooked in favour of the human statement, is seldom so strongly apparent as in this study of a couple in bed. The two figures (Lautrec leaves us uncertain whether the one on the left is a man or a woman) appear almost as an incidental motif in the middle of the masses of blankets and pillows, the balancing and modelling of which is the painter's real concern. For Lautrec makes no use of the possibilities of allusion and erotic association inherent in the bed-clothes themselves (one has only to remind oneself of Fragonard's drawing of the empty four-poster bed, one of the most sublime frivolities of modern art; Besançon, Musée National). Whereas the more detailed representations of the same theme (cf. Lassaigne 1939, Plates 120 and 121) suggest a pronounced interest in the subject, this study is exclusively a struggle with form. The pictorial calculation may be reduced to the balancing of large, comparatively indistinguishable form (white pillows and bed-linen) against vigorous, pronounced form (in the chair on the right) and equally lively colour (particularly top left).

12 Napoleon on Horseback

Peinture à l'essence on board. 61 × 47 cm. Signed bottom left. Executed 1895. Zürich, coll. Emil Bührle.

Literature: Joyant I, 288. – Exhibition Catalogue: De Watteau à Cézanne, Geneva 1951, No. 203.

The choice of this unusual historical subject was occasioned by a competition which the firm of Goupil & Cie announced in order to advertize the book *Histoire de Napoléon Ier* by Professor Sloane.
Lautrec's poster (Delteil 358; Julien, Affiches No. XX), for which this is a high-spirited sketch, was not successful.
The composition is classic in its clarity and severity: in the middle, seen almost from the front (and with the slight turn towards the left corrected by the horse's head being turned in the opposite direction) we have Napoleon mounted on a white horse; behind him and equidistant from him we have on the left a mameluke and on the right a general, both facing outwards. This arrangement of figures is so schematic that one is tempted to read a kind of 'ground-plan' into the picture, that of an open fan. Yet by the vivacity of the individual forms and of the colour, of the brushwork and the distribution of accents, Lautrec counterbalances the severity of the composition and gives the picture its freedom.

13 La Goulue Dancing

Peinture à l'essence on board. 67,5 × 46,5 cm. Signed (monogram) with pencil bottom left. Executed 1895. Paris, private collection.

Literature: Joyant I, 290. – Cat. Exp. Orangerie 1951, No. 60.

In 1895 Lautrec was asked by La Goulue, whom he had painted even before her great successes (cf. Plate 2) and whose star was now already in decline, for a large decoration for her show-booth. He gladly seized this rare opportunity of proving himself in large-scale decoration. The two large panels which resulted are now, after many vicissitudes, housed in the Louvre (cf. Note to Plate 2). (For the original installation see the contemporary photograph in Jourdain/Adhémar, Text Plate V.) On the left panel Lautrec, looking back, painted the young dancer with the contortionist Valentin; on the other we see the present: the dancer, her grace now sacrificed to a fuller figure, is performing her oriental turn. This exquisite little cartoon, showing the dancer proudly holding up her head and stalking along with confidence and assurance in a coloured rustle of draperies, must be one of the preliminary studies for that large-scale decoration. The picture sparkles with vivid colour; it is like the painter's farewell to his model, who was to enjoy, not least thanks to Lautrec's great decoration, a last, brief reprieve from oblivion and decay.

14 A Royal Game of Bezique

Watercolour over a lithograph. 31,5 × 27,5 cm. Signed with monogram at bottom left on the stone. Executed 1895. Geneva, Jean-Pierre Durand.

Literature: Joyant II, 210.

Only very rarely during the two decades of his mature work did Lautrec look for a subject beyond non-bourgeois Paris and its people, and he practically never turned away into an imaginary world. If it did happen, it was always in response to some impetus from without. Thus he produced illustrations to two fairy-tales by Romain Coolus (see also Plate 22). The first of these fairy-tales, *La Belle et la Bête*, appeared with four illustrations by Lautrec in No. 66 (September 1895) of the *Figaro Illustré*. One of these is our sheet with the King playing bezique. It is a monochrome lithograph touched up with watercolours, which was not published and of which only one copy is known to Delteil (Delteil 115). The sheet is characteristic of Lautrec's freedom and love of combination in his choice of technical media. Perhaps, like the watercoloured lithograph of *Jockeys* of 1899 (Plate 31), it was intended as a study for a coloured lithograph.

Lautrec was as little concerned as Coolus with the evocation of a real fairy-tale mood; the contemporary in him was stronger than the dreamer. Thus, as Joyant corroborates, he caricatured the actor Lassouche in the figure of the King's little fellow player.

15 Lucien Guitry and Jeanne Granier

Peinture à l'essence on board. 57 × 43,8 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed 1895. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 288. – Cat. Albi, No. 94.

The theatre is one of Lautrec's most important 'conquests' in the middle years of the nineties. Yet what interested him about the stage, in contrast to Daumier, was not the baroque display, the mere feast for the eyes, the heavily theatrical, but the subtle capacity for expression of the individual performer. Of this, no better proof can be adduced than the series of lithographs of thirteen *Portraits d'acteurs et d'actrices* (Delteil 150–162).

Jeanne Granier and Lucien Guitry (father of Sacha Guitry) attracted Lautrec's attention as the principal actors in Maurice Donnay's 'Amants' in the 'Théâtre de la Renaissance.' Our oil study reproduces a scene of dramatic conflict between the two, and is a masterpiece of rich psychological statement with the utmost economy of artistic media.

16 Lucien Guitry and Jeanne Granier

Blue crayon and watercolour on paper. 50,5 × 35,3 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed 1895. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes.

Literature: Joyant II, 211.

The same actors in the same play as in Plate 15.

They seem to be two different people, yet one recognizes them by their features. The dramatic confrontation has given place to social intercourse. The contrasts have been sublimated, moved on to the plane of pure form and made almost symbolically comprehensible; the man in spirited profile, the woman in the more plastic and elementary view in full-face; for the man cold blue, for the woman warm, seductive red predominating.

This scene was worked out further, with unimportant variations, in an oil study painted on board (illustrated in Jedlicka, p. 277).

17 May Belfort: Sketch for a Poster

Peinture à l'essence on paper. 81,5 × 60,5 cm. Executed 1895. Gates Mills (Ohio), coll. Mr. and Mrs. Frank K. Griesinger.

Literature: Joyant I, 290. – Cat. Exp. 1931, No. 139.

A complete contrast to Yvette Guilbert was provided by the Irish May Belfort, who made her appearance in the middle years of the nineties at the 'Jardin de Paris,' the 'Décadents' and other café-concerts, and who cast her spell not by expressive movement and sparkling vivacity, but by what one might call a mere pantomimic conceit. She dressed as a little girl, usually with a black kitten in her arms, and sang old English songs in a child's clear voice. Lautrec portrayed her in scarcely any other way, and thus as a model she remains a mere episode in his work.

The oil sketch is a draft for the famous poster (Delteil 354; Julien, Affiches, No. XVI). The composition was strictly adhered to in the coloured lithograph, but where, for example, the poster gathers the red dress into a single surface with no gradations of colour or plasticity, the sketch gives us the impulsive calligraphy of the brush. A comparison of this kind illuminates Lautrec's importance for the art of the poster, but also makes it clear that he regarded the poster as a special artistic task for which rules other than those of painting hold good.

MAY BL

18-20 Illustrations to 'La fille Elisa'

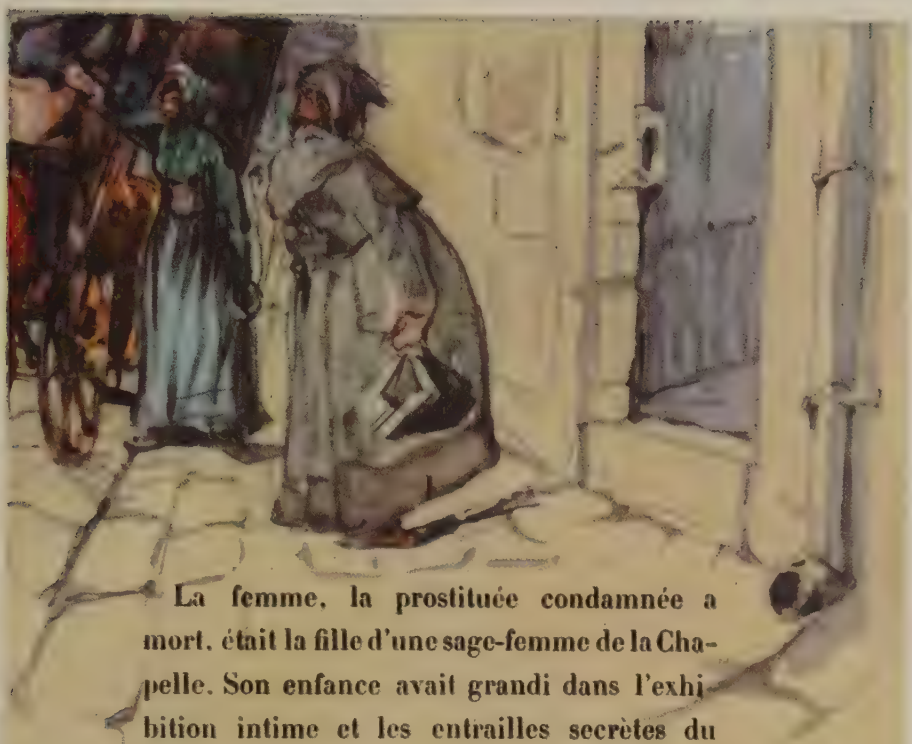
Pencil and watercolour in a copy of Edmond de Goncourt's *La fille Elisa*, Paris (Ed. Charpentier) 1877. 8vo. Executed 1896. Paris, private collection.

Literature: Cat. Exp. Paris 1931, No. 231. – Jourdain/Adhémar, p. 73. – Facsimile Edition, Paris (Librairie de France) 1931.

Jean Ajalbert's stage version of Edmond de Goncourt's *La fille Elisa*, a novel about a prostitute's life, which had appeared in 1877, began to be performed after 1890, and this version stimulated Lautrec to produce illustrations, which he drew in a copy of the novel. Unfortunately the enterprise did not proceed very far, and the illustrations cease with a preliminary sketch at the beginning of Chapter 12 on page 57.

We can only guess at the reasons which caused Lautrec's delight in the work to flag prematurely. Was it insufficient interest in a subject which the artist had already exhausted and which he had scarcely treated for about two years? Or was it perhaps that he did not feel himself in sympathy with a literary source of inspiration, which, although at first sight it met Lautrec's intention by its aim of a realistic and psychological presentation of the world of the *maisons closes*, was still 'literary' by comparison with his own work? It is noteworthy that Lautrec's marginal drawings do not hold at all closely to the story; thus if it was not his intention to produce a straightforward repetition of the novel's events, he must soon have come to the conclusion that he had already said everything he had to say on this theme.

The illustrations can rarely be attributed to any particular passage in the novel. The *Street Scene* (Plate 18; page 13 in the book) could refer



La femme, la prostituée condamnée a mort, était la fille d'une sage-femme de la Chapelle. Son enfance avait grandi dans l'exhibition intime et les entrailles secrètes du métier. Pendant de longues maladies, couchée dans un cabinet noir attenant à la chambre aux *speculum*, — le cabinet de visite de sa mère, — elle entendit les confessions de l'endroit. Tout ce qui se murmure dans des larmes, tout ce qui parle haut dans un aveu cynique, arriva à ses jeunes oreilles. La révélation des mystères et des hontes du commerce de l'homme et de la femme de Paris vint la trouver dans sa couchette, presque dans

19 Illustration to 'La fille Elisa'

Note to Plates 18–20, continued.

to the scene in a later chapter where the sixteen-year-old Elisa, after her flight from the tormenting *milieu* of her childhood, finds herself outside the brothel in a little provincial town and is led into it by an acquaintance. The melancholy *Interior* in Plate 19 (page 27 in the book) gives baldly the situation and atmosphere of the *milieu* into which Elisa has fled, as does the watercolour showing the *Girls among themselves* (Plate 21; page 41 in the book) which immediately reminds us of the brothel pictures of 1894.

IV

Ainsi, pour la petite fille, l'initiation presque dès le berceau, à tout ce que les enfants ignorent de l'amour. Plus tard, quand Elisa [illegible] trois ans chez les dames de Saint-[illegible], la fillette, rentrant le matin de ses congés, était souvent, les jours d'hiver, obligée de démêler, sur le pied du lit de sa mère, son petit manteau du pantalon d'un chantre de la Chapelle de la Maternité, une vieille liaison à laquelle l'ancienne élève sage-femme était restée fidèle. Plus tard encore, la jeune fille avait sous les yeux, jour et nuit, l'exemple que lui montrait sa vie de bonne et de garde-malade près de toutes ces filles-mères.

20 Illustration to 'La fille Elisa'

See Note to Plates 18–20.

VIII

Élisa se voyait délivrée de sa mère. Sa vie de chaque jour était assurée. Le lendemain, le lendemain, cette préoccupation de l'ouvrière... elle n'avait point à y songer. Les hommes qui venaient dans la maison ne battaient pas les femmes. Aucune de ces « dames » ne lui *cherchait misère*. Monsieur et Madame semblaient de bonnes gens. Elle était bien nourrie. Au bout de journées sans travail, elle avait de tranquilles soirées de paresse pareilles à celle-ci :

Au dehors, aucun bruit, la paix d'un quartier mort, le silence d'une rue où l'on ne passe plus, la nuit tombée. Au dedans, l'at-

21 Study for 'Conquête de passage'

Peinture à l'essence on brownish paper. 97 × 67 cm. Signed (monogram) with pencil bottom left. Executed 1896. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 293. – Cat. Albi, No. 100.

The sheet is one of the preliminary studies for the lithograph in the album *Elles* of 1896 (Delteil 188). To these studies belong the drawing reproduced by Joyant (Vol. II, p. 85), and the work in *peinture à l'essence* on board in the Musée des Augustins at Toulouse (Jourdain/ Adhémar, Plate 102). The lithograph differs from the preliminary studies in that the man on the right (not shown in our part study) no longer has the features of the English painter Charles Conder but of Oscar Wilde. – In the most recent issue of *Elles* the sheet bears the title *Le Gommeux* (*Elles* 1952, p. 42).

The brush stroke used here with the utmost economy, attains maximum effectiveness and intensity, without the slightest approach to the independent line of Symbolism. In such sheets we see the power of tradition over French art, in this case particularly the tradition of the ingeniously sublimated realism of the eighteenth century.

22 Illustration to 'Les deux sœurs légendaires'

Blue crayon and watercolour on white paper. 64,5 × 50 cm. Signed with monogram top right. Executed 1896. Geneva, Jean-Pierre Durand.

Literature: Joyant II, 220.

Like *A Royal Game of Bezique* (Plate 14) this crayon drawing is an illustration to a fairy-tale by Romain Coolus, the story *Les deux sœurs légendaires*, which appeared in No. 74 (May 1896) of the *Figaro Illustré* with four colour pictures by Lautrec. The fairy-tale tells of two sisters, a good fair one and a wicked dark one, who are put to a test by a fairy in the shape of a little old woman laboriously carrying her bundle of brushwood. The fair one is rewarded by having pearls and precious stones roll at her feet every time she opens her mouth; the dark one is punished by having vipers and toads come out of her mouth whenever she utters a word. With a startling twist at the end (very characteristic of the time, however) Coolus shatters the spell of the fairy-tale; the fair one dies in poverty because all the jewellers leave her stranded with her treasures, but the dark one, on the other hand, lives happily and enjoys the interest and the financial returns which her animals obtain for her in the zoological gardens.

23 Stage-set for 'Paul et Virginie'

Pencil and watercolour on white paper. 35,3 × 50,5 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed 1896. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant II, 223. – Cat. Albi, No. D 105.

Close though Lautrec's relationship with the theatre was, especially in these years, he never really participated actively and creatively in the work of the stage. The design here reproduced for scenery for the stage version of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel of sensibility *Paul et Virginie* remains an isolated case, and it is more than doubtful whether it was ever executed. The rocky coastal landscape with its view on the rough sea is meant as a framework for the dramatic scene where Paul, awaiting the return of Virginie on his lonely island, looks on helplessly at the wreck of the 'Saint-Géran' and the death of his beloved.

As a landscape representation the sketch has a special position in Lautrec's work as a whole. Although the young painter did, around 1880, use the landscape setting at least as background for his galloping riders and mail coaches, landscape later disappears altogether from his work.

24 Madame Lucy

Peinture à l'essence on board. 57 × 45 cm. Signed with red chalk bottom left: 'TLautrec'. Executed 1896. Paris, Musée de l'Impressionnisme (Louvre).

Literature: Joyant I, 292.

Lautrec often let his partiality for luxuriant hair, and especially for red-brown hair, dictate the composition of his female figures. This may be observed, for instance, in the study of a woman seen wholly from the rear (Cat. Albi, No. 52), or in the sketch for the painting on glass mentioned in the Notes to Plate 5 (Philadelphia, Museum of Fine Arts; Jourdain/Adhémar, Plate 44), or, in this vivid oil sketch, in which, however, the model's features can be distinguished.

25 Marcelle Lender

Watercolour over a lithograph. 48 × 34,5 cm. Signed (monogram) on the stone. Executed 1896. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes.

Literature: Joyant II, 221.

Any selection of Lautrec's works would be inadequate if it did not include the figure of Marcelle Lender, who fascinated the painter by her expressive mobility and by her cunningly studied costumes and coiffures, and who inspired him to create what is perhaps his boldest picture, the *Bolero in the Operetta 'Chilpéric'* (New York, coll. John Hay Whitney; Jourdain/Adhémar, Plate 110).

The basis of the watercolour is the first, uncoloured state of one of Lautrec's best-known lithographs (Delteil 102). Here the artist tried out the colour stresses, and here also he made an important change in the composition by folding the sheet on its left side thus reducing the picture section to the woman's head (that is why the watercolouring ends so abruptly towards the left edge of the picture). Almost as though he wished to make even clearer the reduction Lautrec put a frame around the picture in the later states of the lithograph which grew out of this draft. The coloured lithograph corresponds to the watercolour study except that in it the coat and collar are blue, not green.

26 The Tandem

Watercolour on monochrome lithograph. 38,9 × 59 cm. Bottom right lithographed monogram and manuscript notation: 'a Stern/TLautrec.' Executed 1897. Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago (The Olivia Shaler Swan Collection).

Literature: Joyant II, 226. – Cat. Expos. 1931, No. 346.

As in the studies reproduced in Plates 14, 25 and 31, Lautrec applied with a watercolour brush some well calculated colour accents to the monochrome lithograph (Delteil 218). The theme is one that takes Lautrec back to his own beginnings. Carriage parties, meets, men and women on horseback (Plate 1) are the favourite subjects of the early works up to 1881. After 1897 Lautrec returned to them, particularly in the drawings and lithographs.

A comparison of the early versions of these themes with the later ones reveals Lautrec's individuality. In the later studies this is clearly shown, and the idea of concentration continually comes to mind – concentration on the most expressive pictorial elements in the whole as well as in individual parts. Looking at this country outing, one is not conscious of the fact that it takes place in 'empty space,' because it is easier to recreate in the imagination what the painter has left out, than to remember the fullness of detail in the early works.

27 The Bulldog Bouboule

Peinture à l'essence on board. 59 × 42,5 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed 1897. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 295. – Cat. Albi, No. 105.

Bouboule was the only too diligent guardian of 'La Souris,' a hostelry for women only, and was highly jealous of the exclusive favour of her mistress, Madame Palmyre. If Gustave Coquiot is to be believed, dog and mistress showed astonishing physiognomical similarities.

As an animal painter Lautrec preferred the two species which gratify man's desire for animal companionship – the horse and the dog. He was not looking for primitiveness or the unspoilt purity of the animal (as someone like Franz Marc was) but for anthropomorphic refinement. Thus Coquiot's story of the similarity between the bulldog and her mistress is only the confirmation in concrete terms of what anyone, looking at the picture, spontaneously finds for himself.

Stylistically the oil sketch is very close to the *Study for 'Conquête de passage'* (Plate 21), exhibiting the same mastery in the wholly free, spontaneous, yet precise brush stroke, and an almost nervous vivacity.

28 The Barmaid

Pastel on board. 65 × 49 cm. Bottom right, signed and inscribed: 'A Maurice Joyant / TLautrec.' Executed 1898. Paris, private collection.
Literature: Joyant II, 228. – Cat. Exp. Orangerie 1951, No. 113.

This pastel, one of the few of Lautrec's known, was executed on a visit to London for the exhibition of his works which the Goupil Gallery in Regent Street arranged in 1898.

The tension inherent in Lautrec's art fairly jumps out at the spectator in this pastel. It exists not merely between man and woman but between two temperaments and constitutions which are almost poles apart: on the left the sluggish man contracted into a lump of flesh, and with the bowler-hat hanging from his body like a sign-board; opposite him the slim, trim blonde holding herself affectedly; between the two (and almost exactly in the middle of the picture), radiantly emblematic, the drink which first explains this strange meeting.

Similar ingenious and witty contrasts are found elsewhere in Lautrec's work during this period. In the same year, 1898, he executed what one might almost call a pendant to the *Barmaid* in the fat guest and the anaemic girl at the cash-desk (Zürich, Kunsthaus; Jourdain/Adhémar, Plate 114).

29 Through the Hoop

Pencil and coloured chalks on paper. 35,5 × 25 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom right. Executed 1899. Paris, private collection.

Literature: Joyant II, 238. – Cat. Exp. 1931, No. 271. – Julien, Au Cirque, Plate 30.

From February to May 1899 Lautrec, whose abuse of alcohol had made him more and more irritable and uncontrolled and who had begun to show unmistakable signs of insanity, was incarcerated in Dr. Sémelaigne's institution in nearby Neuilly. The surviving letters from this time give us some indication of how Lautrec suffered under such deprivation of freedom. He forced himself to hold out through his creative work. The rich flowering of these gloomy months there has come down to us in a series of thirty-nine drawings, for the most part in colour, later published under the title *Au Cirque*. They are reminiscences, pictures which memory has called up from a happier and more productive time, particularly from the years around 1890.

If perhaps not one of the most attractive of the series, our illustration is certainly one of the boldest. Here we see with startling clarity how important the strictly pictorial elements in representation were for Lautrec. In the foreground we have the massive forms of the clown seen from the rear, and above him the delicate girl acrobat, relieved of all the fetters of gravity.

From the naturalistic standpoint the relationship of the two figures is quite impossible so far as size is concerned, but what Lautrec is obviously interested in is playing off the ponderous, the bulky, the enormous against the agile, the adroit and the weightless. In a way different from that of the *Barmaid* pastel (Plate 28), antithesis, as an element creating tension, is here too a basic principle of Lautrec's art.

30 Head of an Old Man

Pencil and coloured chalks on bluish paper. 48,5 × 41,8 cm. Executed 1899. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant II, 233. – Cat. Albi, No. D 61.

During his stay in Dr. Sémelaigne's institution Lautrec did more than just take flight in the brightly coloured pictures which his memory called up and filled with magnificent life; he also interested himself as a painter in his surroundings. He thus produced some portraits, of his attendant (who is said to have got drunk on his walks with Lautrec – to the delight of his steadfastly persevering charge) and, above all, the magnificent head of an old inmate of the institution.

There is here none of the oscillating contour of the *Study for the Portrait of M. Delaporte* (Plate 4), none of that sense of tension in the contours which arises from the interplay of the forceful head and the surrounding void. But in the case of the old invalid the head appears embedded in the surroundings (which are not suggested by any external phenomena) so that one continually finds oneself asking where the boundary between the solid element and the insubstantial lies, where the flesh ends and the vibrant and luminous air begins.

31 Jockeys

Watercolour over a lithograph. 51,5 × 38 cm. Bottom right, signed with monogram on the stone and dated in reverse '1899.' Geneva, Jean-Pierre Durand.

Literature: Joyant II, 231.

In 1899 Lautrec conceived a passionate interest in horse-racing and the life of the racecourses. He was asked to produce a series of lithographs on this theme for the publisher Pierrefort. To this commission we owe the watercolour here reproduced. It was a study (in the manner familiar to us from Plates 14 and 26) for the coloured lithograph (Delteil 279). Our watercolour is superior to the final product (the coloured lithograph) in freshness and spontaneity; in the work on the stone the artist has continually to consider a final effect which cannot be checked straight away, especially in the case of coloured lithographs, where for every colour a separate stone has to be treated.

A second study for this lithograph is known, a sketch in oils on board, brilliantly painted despite many corrections (reproduced by Jedlicka, p. 375).

32 Marthe Mellot in Gipsy Costume

Peinture à l'essence on board. 80,2 × 53 cm. Red monogram stamp bottom left. Executed in January 1900. Musée d'Albi.

Literature: Joyant I, 301. – Cat. Albi, No. 120.

Lautrec produced his last poster for Jean Richepin's play *La Gitane* (Delteil 368; Julien, Affiches, No. XXXI). The title role was played by Marthe Mellot of the 'Revue Blanche' circle. The study here reproduced shows her alone, performing the gipsy dance. A few rapid brush strokes flash across the board, leaving it to the spectator's imagination to complete what the eye perceives merely as an indication. The line here attains a degree of immediacy in its reflection of impulse that occasionally it almost makes us forget its character as a mediator of the substantial. No more than a decade was to pass before the first non-substantial improvisations of Kandinsky.

This study for *Gitane* was the first stage of the idea for the picture, and little was left of it by the time the drawing came to be made on the stone. A sketch in oils on board (reproduced by Jedlicka, p. 305) is more like the poster, and, in addition to the more tranquil figure of the gipsy, it also shows the man at the top right.

Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de,
1864-1901
Drawings and sketches in
colour

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